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Sent: Sunday, January 03, 2010 8:00 PM
To: Farak, Sonja (DPH)
Subject: Winter 2010 GIC News

GIC Benefits to Change for Employees and Non-Medicare Retirees and Survivors Effective February 1, 2010

To help meet the GIC's projected FY10 deficit of \$35 million, the Commission voted on November 20, 2009, to implement benefit changes effective February 1, 2010. These changes affect all employee and Non-Medicare retiree/survivor health plans. While it is not unheard of for there to be a need for a supplemental appropriation when costs exceed planned levels, it is rare that benefit changes are needed mid year. Given the state's bleak revenue forecast, however, there is no expectation that a supplemental budget will be submitted this year to make up the projected deficit. [Read more...](#)

Does Minimally Invasive Surgery Make Sense for You? By Robert Sorrenti, M.D., UniCare State Indemnity Plan

In 1987, a surgeon performed the first laparoscopic gall bladder removal. He removed the patient's gall bladder by putting a tube (laparoscope) into the abdomen through a small incision, instead of making a big incision to insert retractors, hands, and scalpels on conventional surgery. This opened the door to minimally invasive surgery (MIS), creating an explosion in the use of the laparoscope to help replace traditional, more invasive, surgical methods. In fact, laparoscopic surgery is now the preferred method for gall bladder removal. [Read more...](#)

Six Massachusetts Hospitals Earn Top Safety Ranking by Leapfrog Group

The GIC congratulates the following Massachusetts hospitals, whose safety practices have earned them a "2009 Leapfrog Top Hospitals" award. The Leapfrog Group, a coalition of employers, including the GIC, committed to the safety, quality and affordability of health care for Americans, bestowed [the following hospitals](#) with their safety award in December:

The GIC Welcomes Employees, Retirees and Survivors from the Following Groups Effective July 1, 2010!

- Town of Brookline
- Town of Hopedale
- Wachusett Regional School District
- Merrimack Valley Planning Commission

Should You Trust a Prescription Drug Ad?

"If you're taking Lipitor for high cholesterol and it's working, why switch?" If you've listened to the radio lately, you're probably familiar with this advertisement. The ad contends that Lipitor is one of the most effective cholesterol medications and that Lipitor may be a better choice than generic medications. But is it? [Read more here....](#)

Express Scripts Member News for UniCare State Indemnity Plan Members

Make Your Selection for Maintenance Medications

If you are taking a maintenance medication for a chronic condition, such as asthma, high blood pressure, or cholesterol, and you get your prescriptions through a local retail pharmacy, you may be contacted by Express Scripts to see if you are interested in saving money by switching to mail order home delivery of your medications. If you receive one of these letters or automated phone calls, ***you need to call Express Scripts to indicate whether you would like to switch to mail order or whether you wish to continue using a retail pharmacy.*** [Read more here...](#)

State Employee and Retiree Benefit Statements Will Be Mailed Late January

State employees and retirees with coverage as of January 1, 2010, will be mailed a personalized annual benefit statement at the end of January. This statement gives an overview of your health, life, and other benefits and who is covered under your plan(s). [Read more...](#)

COBRA Subsidy Extended

President Obama signed legislation that will allow laid-off workers to receive subsidized COBRA premiums for up to 15 months. Previously, the subsidy expired after nine months. The extension, included in a defense spending bill approved by Congress over the weekend of December 19, 2009, also extended the cutoff for eligibility for the COBRA subsidy from December 31, 2009, to Feb. 28, 2010. [Read more here...](#)

COBRA Subsidy Recipients Who Later Become Eligible for Insurance Coverage Must Notify the GIC to Avoid A Penalty

Individuals who have qualified and received the 65 percent subsidy for COBRA health insurance, due to involuntary termination from a prior job, are required by federal law to notify the GIC if they become eligible for other group health coverage. [Read more here...](#)

GIC's Annual Public Hearing

Wednesday, February 3, 2010, 12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Minihan Hall, 6th Floor, Charles F. Hurley Building, 19 Staniford Street, Boston, MA 02114

All GIC-eligible employees and retirees are welcome to attend our annual public hearing. The GIC will describe benefit and premium prospects for FY11 and all attendees are invited to express their views.

The GIC will Cover H1N1 Vaccines at DPH-Clinics

If you or your covered spouse and dependents visit a Department of Public Health (DPH)-sponsored clinic for a H1N1 (swine) flu vaccine, the GIC will cover the cost of your vaccine. Simply show your GIC health plan member ID card, complete an information form, and you will receive the H1N1 flu vaccine at no charge. Members of the UniCare State Indemnity Plans can also receive a seasonal flu vaccine through a DPH clinic at no charge. [Read more...](#)

Choice Can Mean Higher Costs in Health Care

If you want access to every doctor, hospital and procedure in health care, you usually pay for it:

Plan Choice and Premiums

As a GIC member, you have a wide range of plan types. If you are an employee or Non-Medicare retiree, you may choose from an indemnity plan, several PPO-type plans, and HMO plans. If you are a Medicare retiree, you have indemnity Medicare and Medicare HMO options. [Read more...](#)

The winter 2010 issue of the For Your Benefit newsletter includes these topics and more. See the attached link or your GIC Coordinator for a copy of the newsletter.